

The End Times

by SHERALYN ROMAN

For centuries people have stood on the side of roads, on soapboxes or on street corners prophesizing the end of days. Encouraging us to 'repent,' they are often alone, the only believer that the end is truly nigh. The rest of us are merely onlookers as we pass them by with nary a glance. These days however, the person on the street corner has a following, is posting on social media relentlessly and has an audience sometimes in the hundreds of thousands. The problem however, is differentiating between the ones with a loud platform vs. the folks using actual scientific facts to back up their predictions. With plague, pestilence, wildfires and floods wreaking havoc around the world, it may seem like the end times are upon us. Sadly, for scientific fact, I believe that to be true.

The pandemic has proven that for every sound, science-based argument about the efficacy of wearing a mask, washing our hands (that's basic hygiene by the way) and staying away from school and work when we're feeling sick, there's an anti-masker out there demanding his, hers or their 'right' to shop mask free. For every citizen around the country that has rolled up their sleeve for their own and others' benefit, there's an anti-vaxxer spewing nonsense about microchips, altered DNA and vaccine 'shedding.' If you don't believe in vaccines, that's one issue but if you use any kind of platform to actively spread misinformation, that's another thing entirely. Science is based on rigorous and continuous study following a worldwide standard set of principles and practices. Sure, sometimes it evolves as we learn more and advances in technology occur but at its core, it is a standardized method of systematic study that has resulted in little victories like the virtual eradication of smallpox and polio (through, you know 'vaccines) and treatments such as insulin, so people don't die from diabetes. Jenny McCarthy is not a scientist. By all means do your research folks but make sure the sources are credible.

Our recent battle with LDD moths might certainly feel like the 'pestilence' portion of the prophecy of the end times is coming true. In addition to decimating trees, people are reporting extreme reactions after having come into contact with the creepy crawlies. In the US, they've been inundated with Brood X, cicadas that are emerging en masse after a 17-year hibernation. Not only are they noisy, as they emerge, they leave behind their exo-skeleton littering the landscape. They don't do much damage, generally speaking, but some estimates suggest as many as 1.5 million cicadas will emerge, per square acre! Yikes. By the way, if you've never heard a cicada, the decibel level is equivalent to a 'lawnmower or motorcycle.' (Times that by 1.5 million!)

Elsewhere, the far more destructive desert locusts are continuing to wipe out precious crops across various countries in Africa, a mission they have already been on for the past two years and when combined with COVID and lack of access to vaccines, is wreaking havoc in some nations.

More worrisome still is the rapidly advancing drumbeat of climate change.

With British Columbia being ravaged by fire, an entire town wiped off the map, tornados just to the north of us in Barrie, catastrophic floods in Germany as well as other parts of Europe and England issuing its first ever 'extreme heat alert,' I would say we're just 'touching the tip of the iceberg' when it comes to climate change - except even the icebergs are melting! In fact, the 'rate at which the world's glaciers are melting has doubled in the past 20 years.'

Predictions suggest that as early as 2050 we could be facing food insecurity issues and water shortages in some parts of the world as a result. Glacial melting impacts land, oceans, and even currents and jet streams, resulting in anomalies like snow in Texas and scorching temperatures in traditionally cooler climates. Animal habitats are being decimated with trickle down impacts on the food chain being felt across the globe. Scientists have been warning us of the potential impact for years but are we listening? Not surprisingly, some of the biggest climate change deniers are part of, or funded by, the oil and gas industry 'folks who benefit greatly from our reliance on fossil fuels and who have a lot of money to spend on promoting their 'cause.'

Although her soapbox was prominently placed and louder than some of the deniers, when it takes a teenager from Sweden to wake up the world to the truth of climate change science, it means we have a larger problem. The Paris Climate Agreement of 2015

requires nations collectively to keep global heating to less than 2 degrees (ideally 1.5 degrees) or else face dire consequences. Science continues to show us what those consequences might be and I would suggest we are already seeing the significant impact of climate change around the world and here at home. It may well be the end times are upon us and the street corner prophet predicting our doom is right.

Too bad we're listening more often to the doomsayers on the soapbox rather than the scientists sharing actual facts.